



THE DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY'S INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

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How One Idea Can Change the World

By Thomas Kidd - January-March 2009

In less than two years, nearly 150 distinguished ambassadors and more than 2,000 delegates from across the globe will gather for the United Nations International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) World Radiocommunication Conference. During this four-week marathon, committed delegations will scrutinize, debate, create and revise the international treaties that govern the regional and global use of electromagnetic spectrum or radio frequency spectrum.

The final acts of World Radiocommunication Conference 2011 (WRC-11) will receive little if any fanfare beyond stakeholder communities, such as those engaged with cellular telephone service, advanced wireless services and other spectrum-related services, even though the results of this gathering will have direct, significant and global implications to all of us who depend on wireless capabilities that can only be enabled by use of the electromagnetic spectrum — and in the 21st century — it is impossible to imagine a life that isn't directly, or indirectly, dependent on the electromagnetic spectrum.

Much of our modern way of life would be impossible without access to the electromagnetic spectrum. The Department of the Navy (DON) is highly dependent on spectrum-enabled capabilities that provide a multitude of the Navy's and Marine Corps' communication, sensor, intelligence, combat and other capabilities that are vital to the naval services' ability to meet their global responsibilities.

Due to the significant implications to Navy and Marine Corps spectrum capabilities, the DON either closely monitors or actively participates in every WRC preparatory venue to protect the naval services' equities or to advocate for changes that enhance their capabilities.

Additionally, the DON ensures its interests and positions with WRC issues are known and aptly represented by the United States delegation, which includes personnel from the Department of Defense, as well as the DON.

The issues that will be decided at WRC-11 are incredibly diverse as they have been in past conferences. Items on the WRC-11 agenda of particular interest to the DON include current, emerging and future radio applications; unmanned aircraft systems; ship and port safety systems; sea surface radar; and software defined radios. The complete WRC-11 agenda will be available on the DON Chief Information Officer (CIO) Web site at www.doncio.navy.mil, or you can view it now on the ITU Web site at www.itu.int/.

It is inarguable that one of the most important WRC-11 agenda items is the one that requests and ultimately determines future agenda items for later WRCs. Proposed agenda items can be submitted by all participating delegations.

However, the genesis of any particular agenda item is often traced to one or more individuals in organizations involved with research, development, or the operation of spectrum-enabled capabilities. More often than not this can be traced back further to one idea — one idea that ultimately will change the world.

As such, DON program managers, spectrum managers and anyone else in the department associated with research, development, acquisition, governance, or the operation of spectrum-dependent systems or devices, has an opportunity to propose issues that may result as a WRC agenda item.

International governance, spectrum services, radio frequency interference and emerging technologies are just a sampling of issues that "bubble up" from individuals with a regional or global spectrum challenge or a spectrum solution.

It is through the WRC that DON personnel are able to defend and advance the capabilities of the Navy and Marine Corps by improving or modifying the world's use of spectrum. Regulations and procedures for frequency management, in the United States, and the host nations in which our troops train, are grounded in the international treaties that are made and modified at the WRC.

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American anthropologist Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Ideas to change the world, or recommendations for future WRC agenda items, should be sent to the DON Spectrum Team at donspectrumteam@navy.mil.

Tom Kidd is the Department of the Navy director of Strategic Spectrum and Wireless Policy and was a delegate to the World Radiocommunication Conference in 2007. In addition to "Can you hear me now?" he also authors the recurring CHIPS series "Going Mobile" which makes its debut in this issue and focuses on enterprise mobility and the DON Wireless Working Group.

TAGS: [Governance](#), [Spectrum](#), [Telecommunications](#)

CHIPS is an official U.S. Navy website sponsored by the Department of the Navy (DON) Chief Information Officer, the Department of Defense Enterprise Software Initiative (ESI) and the DON's ESI Software Product Manager Team at Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center Pacific.

Online ISSN 2154-1779; Print ISSN 1047-9988
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